DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 960 EA 011 978

AUTHOR	Decker, Virginia A., Ed.
TITLE	Leisure Services Personnel and Community Education. Role Guide Series #9.
INSTITUTION	Virginia Univ., Charlottesville. Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, Mich.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	79
NOTE	25p.; For related documents, see EA 011 970-980
AVAILABLE FROM	Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, School of Education, Ruffner Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903 ($1.00; $8.25 for set of 11 role guides; quantity discounts)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Role; *Community Education; *Community Recreation Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Interagency Cooperation; Program Descriptions; *School Community Cooperation; *School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

This guide is the ninth in a series of eleven generated in 1978 as the result of workshops that focused on peer training, a different approach to teaching. The workshops provided the opportunity for members of eleven identified role groups to work together with peers to examine the relationship between their specific role group and community education and the ways in which they could stimulate their peers to improve role performance and effectiveness. This booklet focuses on community education as seen by leisure services personnel, such as parks and recreation professionals. Topics considered include responsibilities, problems and benefits, training needs, involving citizens in community education, coordinating and cooperating with other agencies, and developing a community education/leisure services partnership. A detailed section at the end describes exemplary community education programs. (Author/LD)

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LEISURE SERVICES PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Role Guide Series #9

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The Role Training Project was made possible by a grant from the U.S.O.E.—Community Education Program. The follow-up activities and publication of the Role Guide Series were made possible by grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Larry E. Decker, Project Director
Sharon M. Rubright, Project Assistant

Published by

Mid-Atlantic Community Education Consortium
c/o University of Virginia
School of Education - Ruffner Hall
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

Printed by University of Virginia Printing Office
1979

Price: $1.00

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Leisure Services Personnel

and

Community Education

Leisure Services Personnel Role Group Members:

Larry Allen (Role Facilitator)
College Park. MD

Kent Blumenthal
College Park, MD

Ron Carter
Columbia, SC

Joanne Cornette
LaPlata, MD

Ted Farrar
Gloucester, VA

James Greiner (Role Facilitator)
Portsmouth, VA

Phil Hester
Richmond, VA

Howard Hunter
Murfreesboro, NC

Tom Hyder
Portsmouth, VA

Gilbert Kingsbury
Fredrick, MD

Mike Lopes
Annapolis, MD

J. Harold Moses
Raleigh, NC

Larry W. Moubry
Carthage, NC

Susan O'Dea
College Park, MD

Kent E. Perkins
Newark, DE

Robert D. Sallitt
Centerville, MD

Darrell Shell
Roanoke, VA

Acknowledgements:

Academies Material Facilitator: Sharon M. Rubright
Technical Reviews: Mary Lou Howerton and Joseph Ringers, Jr.
Editing and Rewrite: Virginia A. Decker
Typing: Ginny Alley and June Seay

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	5
As Leisure Services Personnel, We Believe	6
Introduction	7
The Leisure Services Professional	8
Citizen Involvement	10
Coordination/Cooperation	11
Partnerships	13
Factors Encouraging Community Education/Leisure Service Partnerships	14
Benefits and Problems	15
Training Needs	17
Future Directions	18
Exemplary Programs and Projects	19
Bibliography	24

PREFACE

This booklet is a result of two three-day Role Training and Peer Interaction Academies which were held in 1978 and funded by a training grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Community Education Program. The format for both Academies was designed to focus upon peer training, a method which has proven to be a useful teaching and information sharing approach. The sessions provided the opportunity for members of eleven identified role groups to work together with peers to examine in-depth:

a) the relationship between their specific role group and community education, and

b) the ways in which they could stimulate their peers to improve role performance and effectiveness.

Material development phases were interwoven with both structured and unstructured problem-solving activities. The follow-up activities and publications of the Role Guide Series were made possible from grants by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Through a sharing of information, all participants gained knowledge. The information shared in this booklet is intended for use both by experienced individuals and those just entering the field. The booklet can help the experienced individual to become more aware of additional aspects of the role and of directions being taken by others. It can assist the novice in gaining an overview of the role as seen by those who have worked in this capacity. The information also can be used as a means for guiding others in the community to gain a better understanding of the role and its relationship to community education.

AS LEISURE SERVICES PERSONNEL, WE BELIEVE

We believe that there must be a true partnership of all human service agencies within the community.

We believe that there must be active participation and involvement of citizens in all phases of the community education process.

We believe in stressing responsiveness to citizen needs.

We believe in the recognition and use of the expertise of professional and citizen capabilities on an equitable basis.

We believe that there is a need for community education legislation, jointly prepared and supported by partner agencies, on state and federal levels.

We believe that leisure service professionals must be knowledgeable and involved in the community education movement to insure continued impact on its development.

We believe that, for the community education concept to become a programmed reality, partner agency personnel must face facts objectively, squarely, forcefully, and immediately.

We believe that a more encompassing term for the community education process should be investigated which conveys more accurately the true scope of the concept and which is composed of words that do not tend to exclude partner agencies and to be threatening to community members.

INTRODUCTION

To address the needs of the individual and the community as well as the needs of the profession are generic obligations to all human service agencies and organizations. The process of fulfilling these obligations may be perceived as the catalytic force underlying the process of community education.

Leisure services have been prominent in the assessment of citizens' needs, and the recreation and parks professionals usually are the primary agents for the delivery of services to meet leisure needs. However, disjointed and segregated programs are inefficient and ineffective; and leisure programs must be integrated with other services to meet the total cadre of human needs in a community. In order to achieve the most efficient and effective delivery of services to all segments of the community, a cooperative and shared process must be developed. This process not only should encourage interagency cooperation but also provide for citizen input if their needs are to be addressed effectively.

THE LEISURE SERVICES PROFESSIONAL

Community members recognize that each service agency has particular areas of expertise and that planning, coordination, and development of these service areas are vital for efficient and effective utilization of available resources. But contemporary society is demanding a broader perspective in the provision of all community services. Because leisure services professionals represent one of the viable professional groups involved in the provision of community services, leisure services have taken on new definitions and program responsibilities to keep pace with the increased sophistication and needs of the population.

Today's professional leisure service agents must have a realistic perception of their responsibilities and the specific skills, competencies, and/or abilities that will allow them to function effectively in their professional roles. Most leisure service agents perceive their responsibilities in the community to include the following:

- Provision and programming of leisure activities
- Provision of leisure facilities
- Management, administration and planning of leisure services
- Professional development and training
- Promotion and awareness of recreation and leisure
- Leisure education/leisure counseling
- Coordination and cooperation with other agencies providing leisure services
- Citizen involvement

The skills, competencies and abilities needed to carry out these responsibilities include:

- A sound recreation and leisure philosophy
- Knowledge and understanding of the expanding role and scope of leisure services on all levels
- Training in communication and administration skills
- Personal characteristics including self-motivation, dedication, and a humanistic orientation
- Recreation field work experience
- Experience in working with volunteer and advisory councils

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Community education cannot exist without active citizen participation and support, and citizen involvement is an essential aspect of the community education process. To function effectively, leisure service agents also must utilize citizen input and must give citizens the opportunity to be involved in designing the programs to meet specific community needs.

Specific areas in which to involve citizen groups and to utilize their input are:

- In assessing community needs/establishing community goals and objectives
- In evaluating existing programs
- In identifying and evaluating community resources
- In developing programs to meet specific needs
- In establishing and maintaining funding resources

Some suggested strategies for involving and training citizens in the community decision-making process are:

1. Initiate training for citizens in basic concepts of community services.
2. Develop citizen awareness of the role of leisure services in community services.
3. Examine the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and supply training in "volunteerism" for both volunteers and leisure service staff.

4. Identify citizens' volunteer capabilities and time availability.

COORDINATION/COOPERATION

In addition to citizen involvement, the leisure service agent's identification with community education is in the area of the coordination/cooperation efforts with other agencies in the community. While continuing to act as a leisure service provider to the community, other responsibilities can be accepted by the leisure service professional which will enhance other services to the community as well as the community education process. The following examples are not meant to be exclusive, but are offered to suggest various types of expanded areas of responsibilities:

1. To act as a catalyst/facilitator for coordination and cooperation among community agencies and service providers. Helping to keep two-way communication channels open among agencies to air problems and to coordinate projects and maintaining an active role in an interagency council are two important areas where leisure service agents may accept additional responsibility. Through establishment of a cooperative climate, agencies can become partners in providing services to the community, agency expertise can be utilized fully, and facilities and resources can be shared.

The cooperation among agencies also must involve the school system. The school is one of the service providers to the community. School boards have agents empowered to formulate service agreements among community agencies. It is the responsibility of the leisure service personnel to work with the school board and all partner agencies in the formation of such agreements.

2. To provide financial and technical support and to facilitate an increased sharing of resources. Written agreements between all agencies involved, documentation of cost-sharing factors, specification of all available resources, assistance in finding

new sources of dollars, and making sure funds are expended in an accountable manner are all areas which can be addressed by leisure service agents.

3. To serve as provider/program developer. It is imperative to clarify responsibilities of all involved agencies to prevent duplication and to inventory existing programs in the community. The development of a comprehensive needs assessment for all human service agencies and the sharing of costs of publication, distribution, and evaluation of programs will provide a more complete understanding of community needs at less expense to the taxpayer.

4. To serve as an advocate of special population groups. An area that is becoming much more visible and of concern is the assessment of needs of the special or handicapped populations. The leisure service provider must become familiar with legislation regarding the rights of the handicapped and the regulations with regard to program implementation. Assessment of their special needs and involving other agencies to serve these needs is a responsibility that more leisure services agents should accept.

PARTNERSHIPS

Although it is apparent that active, continual public involvement is the goal of community education, the actual process cannot be successful without a spirit of cooperation among those who carry out the programs and processes. The needs of the community must be met by a partnership of responsible agencies and organizations who perceive themselves as active members of a team, none of whom is more important than the other. Each partner must strive for excellence in the service it can render and must recognize that all other partners also are striving for excellence in their services. Each partner's respect for the efforts of all other partners is of utmost importance in determining identified needs in the community.

Different models can be used to facilitate the cooperative process. Regardless of which partner assumes the leadership role in the chosen model, each involved agency/organization must serve in a true partnership capacity to insure success. Each partner agency/organization, while performing its service, must be alert to the needs of community members which may be better served by another partner. A referral system is necessary to facilitate the operating of all partners, and community facilities, whether schools, firehouses or community centers, must be made available for use by the public and by partner agencies involved in meeting the needs of the public.

Interagency or community resource councils are essential to foster positive dialogue and cooperation among members of the community education partnership. The leisure service professional can serve as a catalyst/facilitator in the process of getting involved parties together to form this council.

FACTORS ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY EDUCATION/ LEISURE SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

There are several factors in our society that leisure service agents view as having positive effects on the growth of a community education/leisure service partnership. The factors include the increase of single parents, older communities, forced retirement with longer life expectations, competency-based curriculum, accountability, reduced tax base and, the changing role of minorities and women in our society. The future of the movement is perceived to be tied to the responses to these social forces.

The development and functioning of the partnership, according to the leisure service professional, will occur and be on firm ground if both partners are able to:

1. Remove the "education" stigma and become more concerned with the delivery of needed services by whichever agency or organization can best do the job.

2. Facilitate mutual coordination or cooperation through a multi-agency approach utilizing formal agreements.

3. Create a support base within the community to facilitate the conversion of administrators and policymakers and to broaden and strengthen the support for federal and state legislation.

4. Involve the citizenry in the decision-making process in such a manner as to gain some degree of community control and to achieve the development of positive and comprehensive leadership.

BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS

The need for the community to have an active role in the planning, implementation, and delivery of programs is a concept which the leisure service professional supports. The benefits from active community involvement include:

- Reduction of duplicated services
- Reduction of competition among human service agencies
- Increased availability and use of public buildings
- More efficient use of tax dollars
- Increased community support
- Expanded citizen participation
- Increased public exposure resulting in improved public relations
- Increased understanding of the different human service roles in the community

However, in order to secure these benefits, problems or areas of concern must be overcome. Leisure service agents perceive these problems as hurdles to be jumped rather than walls to stop progress. Some problems identified by leisure service agents which influence the implementation of community education include:

- Turf protection
- Exclusion of segments of the community
- Duplication of service offerings

- Inaccurate definition or lack of definition of roles
- Bureaucratic inflexibility
- Lack of citizen involvement in the program development
- Lack of interagency cooperation

The problem most often cited by both community educators and leisure services agents is protection of professional identities. The question of "turf" arises with regard to clients, facilities, and budgetary allotments. Several strategies for addressing this problem include:

1. Developing a personal rapport with the administration of all agencies involved.
2. Taking a leadership role for interagency cooperation (catalyst) and being willing to assume a supportive role at times.
3. Understanding formal and informal power structure within the community.
4. Conducting a needs assessment that addresses total community needs.
5. Stressing citizen involvement.

TRAINING NEEDS

Community education training should be provided for (a) leisure services personnel and partner agency professional personnel, and (b) lay citizens. Training will be most effective if conducted by staff and peers who already are involved in the community education process and who have established a credibility base with their peers. Professional training needs include:

1. Initial training to gain an understanding of the philosophical and theoretical foundation of community education including goals, objectives, essential elements, and models.

2. Training to increase awareness of the human, physical and financial resources available to human service professionals.

3. In-service training regarding changes, trends, and new developments in community education.

4. Training regarding the role of the interagency resource council, including its development, implementation, benefits, and problems.

5. Training to increase understanding of the role of human service agencies' policy and/or advisory boards and of the benefits of linkages and partnerships among human service agencies.

6. Training to increase knowledge and skill in working through, for, and with citizen councils.

Training needs of lay citizens include:

1. Training to gain an understanding of the philosophical and theoretical foundation of community education including goals, objectives, essential elements, and models.

2. Training to assist in the development and implementation of citizen councils.

3. Peer training which includes opportunities to visit community education facilities and programs.

4. Peer training which includes opportunities to share information among members of functioning citizen councils.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Leisure services professionals agree that it is realistic to assume that the majority of community education programs will remain school-based because of the advantages of availability of facilities and proximity to the community members. However, some disadvantages to a school-based model which is administered totally by education professionals include:

- The tendency to have a narrow perspective of leisure services components
- The tendency to fail to recognize expertise in other related fields
- The tendency to have a bureaucratic structure which results in a lack of citizen involvement

Most leisure service personnel believe that the future of the community education movement will not depend upon its acceptability as a concept; they feel that it is well established and well supported. They believe that the future will depend upon the people who espouse it, who operate it, and cooperate with it. These advocates and practicioners will determine its success or failure and the concept itself will have minimal effect on its fate. The

problems and obstacles to community education's further development and implementation are caused by the attitudes and actions of people and the responses to these attitudes and actions by others in the community.

The key to a successful future for community education lies in the understanding of the concept. If professionals truly understand the concept, they should not feel threatened. Leisure service professionals believe that understanding of the concept lies in emphasizing one word in the name. The word is: Community--a term that does not refer to the one who is doing the serving, but to the recipient of the services.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS OR PROJECTS

1. Parks and Recreation and School District Partnership

Description:

In order to make increased and more efficient use of public facilities, the City of Newark has entered into an agreement with the School District, wherein the City uses schools after normal K-12 hours without cost; and in return, the City picks up all trash from City schools and some schools on the fringe of the City.

In addition, the City uses several ball fields on school property, and in return maintains the fields. The City also has placed lights on tennis courts at the high school, maintains the lights and poles, and uses the facility for tennis instruction.

Why Successful:

Both parties involved recognize the cost savings; both stand to gain from the arrangement; and both receive very positive support based on the public's apparent concern for

saving money, for enhancing intra-city co-operation, and for providing quality leisure experiences.

Contact Person: Kent Perkins
Department of Parks and Recreation
Newark, Delaware 19711

2. Multi-Agency Senior Citizens Program

Description:

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission at Deerfield Run Community Center established a program to provide senior citizens in a tri-county area with necessary community, leisure, and nutritional services. The Food and Friendship site incorporates the services of the M-NCPPC; and County Library; the Citizens Advisory Board; the Divisions on Aging of Prince George's County; Howard County and Anne Arundel County; Oaklands United Presbyterian Church; the Patuxent Social Club; the Health Department; the Mental Health Department; local volunteers; local recreation councils; CETA Artists-in-Residence; the County Extension Service; local outreach; and information and referral. Job referral services and paralegal services also are being planned. The site opened September, 1978.

Contact Person: Susan O'Dea
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8408 Potomac Avenue
College Park, Maryland 20740

3. Special Senior Citizens Program

Major Goal:

To establish a satellite senior citizens program within the service area of Masons Cove

Community School.

Description:

The Community School Advisory Council of Mason's Cove Elementary School requested the Roanoke County Parks and Recreation Department Special Programs Division to begin a senior citizens program in the service area of that school. The need was verified by an in-depth needs assessment which showed a real lack of senior programs for the more than 300 persons living in the area who were over 60 years of age.

Because no full-time staff was available to begin the programming, a VISTA worker was secured through the area-wide Agency on the Aging. Under the guidance of the senior citizens supervisor from the Parks and Recreation staff, the VISTA worker met with the Advisory Council and the Community School Facilitator to begin planning. Eventually a special luncheon and meeting invitation was issued to all seniors within the service area of the Mason's Cove Community School.

As a result of that meeting and other meetings, a full five-day per week program is now under way in three local sites including the school, the Community Room of the local fire station, and a local church. Program components include:

1. Blood pressure screening
2. Ceramics and pottery programs
3. Special legal classes for wills, deeds, and taxes
4. Weekly luncheons
5. Trips to doctors, clinics, shopping centers
6. Special programs at the main Senior Center and the local community college
7. Retired Senior Volunteer Program
8. Exercise and athletic program
9. Special programs with Social Security

and the Welfare Departments

This program is successful because of the grass roots involvement of the Advisory Council and the seniors themselves. In addition, a special partnership among several agencies in the delivery of services provides good rapport between the agencies and with the clients themselves. All of the following agencies were involved in varying but significant degrees:

1. Virginia Polytechnic Institute Extension
2. Virginia Western Community College
3. Health Department
4. Welfare Department
5. Parks and Recreation Department
6. School Board
7. Fire Department
8. Social Security
9. Area-Wide Agency on Aging

Contact Person: Darrell Shell, Director
Roanoke County Parks and Recreation Department
5929 Cove Road, N.W.
Roanoke, Virginia 24019

4. Project Outreach

Goals:

1. To keep youth from dropping out of school.
2. To get dropouts back into school.

Project Involved Cooperative Efforts By:

1. Juvenile Services
2. Social Services
3. Courts
4. Senior Citizens
5. Recreation and Parks
6. Board of Education
7. Library System

8. Humane Society
9. Community Volunteers

Description:

Through a grant, a counselor was hired by Recreation and Parks Commission to work with youth. For youth who could not be convinced to stay in school or go back to school, jobs were sought through newspaper ads. These ads were a major factor in bringing about community support and the eventual creation of an Inter-agency Advisory Council.

One key to success was the favorable image the Recreation Agency had in the community. Also, so many people were in support of the project that principals were willing to take youth back into the schools.

Contact Person: Bob Sallitt, Director
Queen Anne's County Recreation
and Parks Commission
P.O. Box 37
Centreville, Maryland 21517

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